

POSSIBLE CHANGES TO REGULATIONS FOR FISHING IN NONTIDAL WATERS

The Department is considering five changes:

1) Extend the upper boundary on the North Branch Potomac River's Upper Catch-and-Return Trout Fishing Area upstream about 600 feet to the public access point along the Senator Sarbanes Trail.

Discussion: The purpose of this idea is to increase angler access and fishing opportunities in the North Branch Potomac River. The United States Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) approached the Maryland Department of Natural Resources' Inland Fisheries Division regarding increasing public access to the Upper Catch-and-Return Trout Fishing Area in May 2016. This area under consideration is owned by the USACE – Jennings Randolph Lake Project.

Currently the public has access along the river via the Senator Sarbanes Trail; however, one must walk downstream about 500 feet before legally being able to fish. The USACE would like to provide fishing opportunities in this stretch of the river. The boundary would move upstream to the point where the Senator Sarbanes Trail meets the river, at a location agreed upon by the USACE. Also, if this additional stretch of the river would be open to public fishing, the Inland Fisheries Division would have additional stocking locations. As of now, there is only one stocking location access point in the Upper Catch-and-Return Trout Fishing Area.

2) Change the closure period from a "1" to a "0" on the following streams managed under Put-and-Take Trout Fishing Areas: Georges Creek, Accident Pond, Muddy Creek and Little Youghiogheny River.

Discussion: The above mentioned waterbodies are closed to fishing for up to three weeks after the initial stocking. Inland Fisheries staff have received calls during the past several years that catch rates were low or non-existent by opening day (Georges Creek). Georges Creek still has acid mine drainage (AMD) issues and is a very "flashy" stream during rain events. The lower portion of Georges Creek has a Youth and Blind Trout Fishing Area; however, it is no longer stocked due to periodic AMD issues. Accident Pond and Little Youghiogheny River basically serve the local community as a fishing location, and Inland Fisheries staff believe anglers travel from afar to fish these locations. Accident Pond is frequently fished by the youngsters in the community since it is located adjacent to the Town Park. The Little Youghiogheny River within the Town of Oakland is also a very "flashy" stream and does become quite turbid during rain events. Muddy Creek has experienced fish kills due to acidification; however, fish kills have been avoided since limestone was deposited in the stream (1999 - present), but during heavy snowmelt events the pH can still dip below 6.0 – so it is still on the brink at times.

In order to provide increased angler opportunity and a better return (catch) on the stocked trout a change from a "1" closure to a "0" closure will allow fishing immediately after the initial stocking. All four locations combined will provide for an additional 84 days of recreational fishing opportunities. Water quality issues that may occur during the three week closure period may be less of an issue if anglers can fish for the trout immediately after stocking, providing a better return on the trout.

3) Require an individual to have a trout stamp to catch, attempt to catch or possess trout.

Discussion: Prior to the 2016 legislative session, it was unclear where an individual needed a trout stamp. Legislation became effective in 2016 that allows the Department to clarify the trout stamp requirements and remove any confusion about the management areas covered by the trout stamp. Requiring a trout stamp when you are fishing for or possessing trout was suggested rather than specifying a specific area because a person may be fishing for species other than trout in the same area.

4) Establish a legal dividing line on Barren Creek, a large tributary to the Nanticoke River.

Discussion: Currently there is no legal dividing line on Barren Creek. Place a dividing line at the US 50 bridge. An alternate site is the site of an old mill dam slightly downstream.

5) Increase the possession limit to twice the daily creel limit for certain nontidal fish species and change the daily/possession limits for yellow perch. See bold numbers in the table below for changes.

Discussion: This regulation is proposed in order to maintain consistency with having a double the daily creel possession limit on all species except American eel and baitfish. By increasing the possession to twice the daily creel, it will allow someone who may be on a multi-day fishing trip the ability to keep more than one daily limit without having to consume them each day. The species included are the species that currently don't have a possession limit or have a possession limit that is the same as the daily limit. The minimum sizes are not changing.

	Daily	Possession
Chain Pickerel	5	10
Muskellunge & Tiger Muskie	1	2
Northern Pike	2	4
Striped Bass & Hybrid Striped Bass	2	4
Trout - Statewide (all species)	2	4
Trout - Put-and-Take Areas (all species)	5	10
Walleye	5	10
Yellow Perch –		
Nontidal Streams and Rivers	10	20
Nontidal Lakes and Ponds	10	20